

Iowa Department of Human Services

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July 19, 2011

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Survey of "Aged Out" Youth Shows State Help Makes a Difference

DES MOINES, **Iowa** – A survey of young adults who have "aged out" of foster care and participate in the state's aftercare program shows a large majority have a safe place to live and have enough resources to meet their needs.

The survey also shows the youth appreciate the support they receive despite a sluggish economy that makes it difficult for them to find jobs.

About 400 lowa youth age out of foster care every year, meaning they are neither adopted nor reunited with their families after foster care services end at age 18. Of those, about half choose to participate in aftercare programs offered by the Department of Human Services. The others decline services.

"We know that adulthood will bring enormous challenges for these youth, which is why we are so aggressive about encouraging participation in our aftercare programs," said Wendy Rickman, administrator of the Adult Children and Families division of the DHS.

Of the 358 youth who responded to the written survey in April, about 65 percent were participating in the Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) component of the aftercare program. PAL provides a monthly stipend for youth who are either working or going to school and who were in state paid foster care on their 18th birthday.

The remaining respondents were participating in the "basic" aftercare program, which does not provide a monthly stipend but does offer case management and connections to adult services.

Both programs require frequent contact with case managers who teach life skills such as money management and relationship building. More than 97 percent of the youth agreed that his or her advocate "is supportive and encourages me most of the time," and 94 percent said they are getting all the support they need.

Ninety-seven percent said they have a safe and stable place to live, and 73 percent said they have enough resources to meet living expenses.

Of all respondents, about 75 percent said they were either working or going to school or a combination of both, which compares to about 82 percent in a similar survey two years ago. The program provides assistance until the young adult's 21st birthday.

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Editors: On request, we will find a young adult or two in your area to interview.

Editors: Here are the survey results.